

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: DON'T BE FOOLED BY RENE'S RHETORIC

REF: QUEBEC 0113

1. PREMIER LEVESQUE TOLD NATIONAL ASSEMBLY YESTERDAY THAT PQ IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO TOTAL AND COMPLETE QUEBEC INDEPENDENCE FROM CANADA. RESPONDING TO LIBERAL LEADER GERARD D. LEVESQUE, PREMIER SAID SEPARATION (SIC) WOULD MEAN THE END OF ANY LINKS WITH THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT AND AN END TO FEDERAL TAXATION IN QUEBEC. OUR POLITICAL OPTION, PREMIER SAID, IS TO LEAVE THE 109 YEAR OLD FEDERAL SYSTEM WHICH WE BELIEVE IS LESS AND LESS EFFICIENT. AFTER ACHIEVING PQ OBJECTIVE--INDEPENDENCE, QUEBECOIS WILL STOP FILLING TWO TREASURIES AS TAXES WILL BE PAID ONLY TO GOQ. LEVESQUE REPEATED THAT HE HOPES TO MAINTAIN AN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION WITH CANADA. PQ NEVER SAID IT WANTED TO FRACTURE ECONOMIC LINKS WITH CANADA. HE SAID, PEOPLE IN HIS GOVERNMENT ARE TRYING TO WORK

OUT THE BASIS FOR A COMMON MARKET WITH CANADA AFTER INDEPENDENCE.

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WM ASKED TO COMMENT ON A RECENT GALLOP POLL WHICH SHOWED THAT 22 PERCENT OF QUEBECOIS FAVOR INDEPENDENCE AND 63 PERCENT ARE OPPOSED
,
PREMIER SAID HE REALIZED THAT A MAJORITY OF QUEBECKERS WERE NOT IN FAVOR OF PQ SOVEREIGNTIST OPTION. HOWEVER, GOQ INTENDS TO CONVINCE PEOPLE ABOUT INDEPENDENCE. FINAL DECISION WILL BE MADE IN REFERENDUM. HE GAVE NO HINT WHEN REFERENDUM WOULD COME BUT MANY OBSERVERS NOW

BELIEVE THAT IT WILL BE IN FINAL YEARS OF HIS FIVE-YEAR MANDATE UNLESS

SOME UNFORSEEN ISSUE ARISES WHICH CREATES ATMOSPHERE FAVORING INDEPENDENCE VOTE. LEVESQUE NOTED A SURVEY TAKEN RIGHT AFTER NOV. 15 ELECTION SHOWED ONLY 11 PERCENT IN FAVOR OF INDEPENDENCE AND SUGGESTED, TONGUE IN CHEEK, THAT DOUBLING OF PERCENTAGE IN THREE MONTHS WAS CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS. HE CONVENIENTLY OVERLOOKED FACT THAT PRE-ELECTION POLLS SHOWED 20 PERCENT IN FAVOR OF INDEPENDENCE AND MOST ANALYSTS BELIEVE DROP TO 11 PERCENT WAS TEMPORARY POST-ELECTION REACTION BY STILL SKITTISH QUEBEC VOTERS.

3. COMMENT: LEVESQUE WAS QUESTIONED CLOSELY FOLLOWING A WEEK OF COMMENTS BY PQ PERSONALITIES WHICH PLACED EMPHASIS ON ASSOCIATION PART OF SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION FORMULA (REFTEL). AT FIRST BLUSH, THIS FREQUENT SHIFTING OF EMPHASIS BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND ASSOCIATION MAY APPEAR TO SOME AS THE BEGINNINGS OF A CHANGE OF HEART ON PART OF PQ LEADERS. SUCH AN INTERPRETATION IS DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN AFTER CLOSE EXAMINATION. BOTH POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY AND ASSOCIATION CONTINUE TO BE TWIN CORNERSTONES OF PQ PROGRAM. WHILE MANY OF THE UNANOINTED MAY FIND THESE GOALS CONTRADICTORY, THEY ARE SEEN BY PEQUISTE LEADERS AS ESSENTIAL TO GAINING MAXIMUM CONTROL OF PROVINCE WHILE PRESERVING IMPORTANT ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH REMAINDER OF CANADA. SHIFTS IN EMPHASIS ARE OFTEN AIMED AT DIFFERENT PQ AUDIENCES AS NOTED IN QUEBEC 0031. LAST WEEK'S TILT TOWARD ASSOCIATION MAY HAVE BEEN ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE CANADIAN POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSMEN THAT PROPOSED ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION IS A VIABLE AND ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENT FEDERAL SYSTEM. IT MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN INVITATION TO FEDS TO NEGOTIATE. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TANTILIZING SUGGESTIONS SUCH AS "BREAKUP OF FEDERATION IS NOT NECESSARY IF PQ DEMANDS MET" MAY ALSO BE AIMED AT OUTFLANKING TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT BY BUILDING PRESSURE AMONG CONCERNED ANGLOPHONES TO FORCE TRUDEAU PROPOSE CONSTITUTIONAL CONCESSIONS. REFUSAL BY GOC WOULD THEN REINFORCE IMAGE OF INFLEXIBLE CENTRALISTS IN OTTAWA

ON OTHER HAND, SHOULD FEDS AGREE TO MAKE OFFER, QUEBEC IS IN POSITION TO PICK UP ATTRACTIVE PACKAGE OF CONCESSIONS, OR TO USE OPENING PRESENTED BY GOC TO ENLARGE APPETITE OF QUEBECOIS MASSES FOR LARGER SLICE OF AUTONOMY. UNLESS NATURE OF GAME IS SOMEHOW CHANGED BY UNUSUALLY ADROIT OTTAWA INITIATIVE OR BY PARTICULARLY HEAVYHANDED PQ BLUNDER, TACTICAL ADVANTAGE SEEMS TO LIE WITH QUEBEC AS CUT AND THRUST CONTINUES BETWEEN TWO GOVERNMENTS. MCNAMARA

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